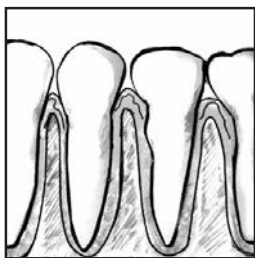


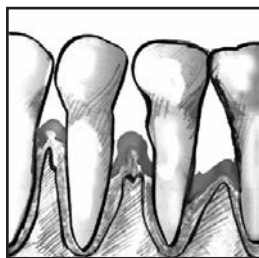
## What happens if I have plaque?

Plaque that is not removed hardens over time into tartar and collects above your gum line. Tartar makes it more difficult to brush and clean between your teeth. Your gums become red and swollen, and bleed easily—signs of unhealthy or inflamed gums, called **gingivitis**.

When gingivitis is not treated, it can advance to gum disease called **periodontitis**. In periodontitis, the gums pull away from the teeth and form spaces, called pockets, which slowly become infected. This infection can last a long time. Your body fights the bacteria as the plaque spreads and grows below the gum line. Both the bacteria and your body's response to this infection start to break down the bone and the tissue that hold the teeth in place. If periodontitis is not treated, the gums, bones, and tissue that support the teeth are destroyed. Teeth may become loose and might need to be removed. If you have periodontitis, your dentist may send you to a **periodontist**, an expert in treating gum disease.



Healthy gums



Periodontitis